

12 KEYS TO LOWER RISK CANNABIS USE

HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES



GUIDELINES FOR REDUCING CANNABIS HEALTH HARMS

With cannabis use on the rise, Fisher et al. (2021) conducted a review of the most relevant research on strategies to reduce the negative health impacts of cannabis use. The following suggestions are the *12 key takeaways* from their review of current and leading research on cannabis harm reduction strategies.



THE LATER, THE BETTER

Frequent use before late adolescence is linked to adverse impacts on neurological, psychosocial, and mental development. Waiting until your body and mind has had time to develop before using cannabis is key!

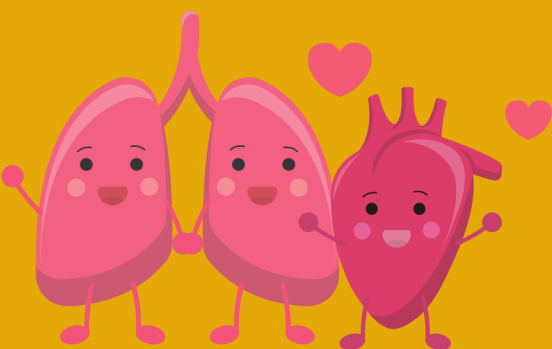
KNOW THE DOSE

Over time, THC content in cannabis products (the psychoactive component of cannabis) has increased significantly. Choosing lower potency cannabis products, either with low THC content or a high CBD-to-THC ratio, can lessen negative outcomes from THC.



PROTECT YOUR HEART & LUNGS

Smoking cannabis has negative impacts on both your heart and lungs! While any way to consume cannabis has its cons, research suggests using alternate methods to consume cannabis to avoid exacerbated adverse health impacts.



NOT A TIME FOR DEEP-BREATHING

If you *do decide* to smoke cannabis, avoid holding the smoke in your lungs or other forms of deep inhalation! The longer the smoke is present, the longer other toxic content is as well.



MODERATION WINS

The math is simple: how much and how often you consume cannabis is linked to the severity of adverse health impacts. Avoid daily or near-daily use, as well as how much cannabis you consume at once, ideally sticking to use no more than once or twice a week!



KEEP IT LEGIT

Getting cannabis from legal and regulated sources, like dispensaries, means having a better sense of both the potency and content of what you're consuming. Quality standards minimize the amount of contaminants a cannabis product might contain!



LISTEN TO YOUR BRAIN

Cannabis use can impair your cognitive functioning (memory, speed, decision-making, etc.), - with impacts sometimes lasting for a while after you stop using. If you notice any signs of cognitive impairments, consider taking an extended break from cannabis, or drastically reducing the intensity (dosage + frequency) of use.



DO NOT DRIVE

Contrary to myth, using cannabis drastically impacts your ability to drive or operate other heavy machinery. It also comes with the potential for harm to yourself and others in the form of accidents or severe legal consequences! Wait 6 to 8 hours before driving if you've smoked cannabis (8 to 12 hours if in the form of edibles).



THINK AHEAD

Cannabis use can have negative impacts on reproductive ability in males and females, as well as post-natal outcomes for offspring and people who are pregnant. If you're planning to conceive a child, consider abstaining from cannabis use to reduce the risk to yourself and the infant!

AVOID THE MIX

Using cannabis with other substances can magnify the negative impacts of both substances. Avoid mixing cannabis with alcohol, tobacco, or other psychoactive substances. If you take prescription medication, be sure to talk to your doctor about the potential interaction between cannabis and your medication!



KNOW YOUR HEALTH HISTORY

Cannabis use is linked to increased risk for the development or exacerbation of psychotic disorders like schizophrenia, mood (or depressive) disorders, as well as substance use disorders. It also increases the chance for adverse health outcomes, such as heart disease. When considering whether, how much, or how often to use cannabis, also consider your own health and family history!



KNOW YOUR RISK FACTORS

The more risk factors that are present, the greater the chance and scope of adverse health impacts from cannabis use can be. Take some time to think about what risk factors, such as your intensity of cannabis use and family history, may impact your health and overall wellbeing.



A FINAL NOTE:

Harm Reduction, Not Prevention:

Anytime you use cannabis, you are taking on some extent of risk for negative health outcomes. These keys are to reduce the extent of negative impacts, but the only way to avoid them altogether is through abstinence.

Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD):

Frequent use over a long period of time can lead to cannabis dependence, or Cannabis Use Disorder. If you or someone you know may be experiencing CUD, help is available. Visit NAU Counseling Services for more info!

Practice Social Responsibility

Reducing harm is not only for your own wellbeing, but others around you. Remember to stay aware of how your actions impact others. Avoid things like exposing others to smoke, driving while impaired, etc.